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TWO ESSAYS

BY
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TO THE MEMORY OF THE TEACHERS
OF FRANCE
SCHOLARS AND PATRIOTS ALL
WHO DIED IN THE GREAT WAR
THAT MANKIND MIGHT LIVE
IN JUSTICE FREEDOM AND PEACE
WE DEDICATE THE TRANSLATION
OF THESE TWO ESSAYS
WHEREIN ARE RECORDED
THEIR VALOR AND THEIR SPIRIT
AND THE IDEALS DEVOTION TO WHICH
FORMED THEIR SUPREME INSPIRATION

PREFACE

Victor Giraud, the author of the two essays contained in this volume, was born November 26, 1868, at Macon, France, famous as the birthplace of Lamartine, the kindly, friendly, human author of the *Méditations,* the vigorous and patriotic exponent of liberalism, the poet-statesman of the Republic of 1848. It was at the Lycée Lamartine in his native town that Victor Giraud spent his youthful years of study preparatory to going to Paris, where he later entered the famous Lycée Henri IV. In the early nineties he was a pupil at the Ecole Normale Supérieure, that justly renowned institution on the Rue d'Ulm wherein the intellectual elite of each generation is trained under the best of masters as scholars and cultivated men, for their life work as teachers and guides to the youth of the nation in the Lycées and Universities. Here he came under the happy influence of the great Brunetière "who, confronted by a type of criticism too exclusively philological or too minute, maintained the inalienable rights which may be justly claimed by ideas and intelligence." Brunetière was his master and friend whose secret wish was that some day his pupil might write "the history of his thought and writings." In 1894 Victor Giraud won his title of *agrégé des lettres* and forthwith went to the Univer-

sity of Fribourg, Switzerland, where for several years he held the professorship of Modern French Literature. In 1897 he took as the subject of one of his courses—Taine, his works and influence. This was the outgrowth of work begun six years before while he was a pupil at the Ecole Normale and had received the kindly consideration of Taine himself. These lectures were published in 1901 as an Essay on Taine and were awarded the Bordin prize by the French Academy. A year after appeared his Critical Bibliography of Taine.

Taine was not the only author whose life and works and influence held the interest of the young professor. In the summer of 1898 he gave a course on Pascal, the notes of which were published as *Pascal, l'homme, l'oeuvre, et l'influence,* 1898, disclosing the marked influence of Brunetière's method. The work was crowned by the Academy. When he published his: *Pascal: Etudes d'histoire morale,* 1901, the Academy awarded it the first Bordin prize. In the preface of this work he writes: "For twenty years Pascal has been my almost constant companion and I could never express the profit, intellectual and other, which I feel I have derived from this companionship. Of all the influences that I have undergone that of Pascal is certainly the one which began the earliest, has been the least interrupted, and remained the most profound, an influence not only undergone, but sought after, desired, and loved."

A third great name and influence in French literature owes much to the active pen and indefatigable mind of M. Giraud, for his Studies on Chateaubriand, 1904, 1912, are but a foretaste and promise of a work announced in preparation on the Religion of Chateaubriand: origins, evolution and influence—a critical study in the history of religious ideas in the French literature of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The present, also, has furnished an attractive field for the fruitful pursuit of his quest: the discovery, exposition, and criticism of the dominant ideas of the age as expressed in literature by the master minds who have exerted great influence on the generation which is to-day in full activity. The Masters of Yesterday and To-day (*Les Maîtres d'hier et d'aujourd'hui,* 1912, and *Les Maîtres de l'heure,* 2 vols., 1911, 1914) were crowned by the Academy and awarded the first prize of the Academy. These essays treat with method, precision, and wonderful acumen, the lives, works and influence of the most important literary critics and novelists, poets and historians of the present day or the immediate past. Keenly interested in life with all its problems, particularly those dealing with religion and morals, M. Giraud has written many essays, such as those collected in Books and Questions of the Day (*Livres et Questions d'Aujourd'hui,* 1906) *Anticléricalisme et catholicisme,* 1906, *Ferdinand Brunetière,* 1907. He has edited the *Pensées* of

Pascal. and selections from his other works; *Pensées, Réflexions, Maximes* from Chateaubriand's works; the *Pensées* of Joubert; *Pensées* selected from the works of Bossuet, and many other books.

All these works clearly indicate the variety, the unity of interest and method characteristic of the subject of this sketch. He stands to-day one of the acknowledged masters of the art so eminently French: fruitful, helpful, suggestive criticism, the outcome of clear thinking, exact knowledge, combined with clarity of expression and felicity of phrase, lightness of touch and accuracy of thrust, and a wide. but definite view of general ideas, derived from an intimate, refined knowledge of the relations of man, his thoughts and his actions. His own view of criticism he once expressed as follows: "I never had much faith in what we were wont to call, in days gone by, scientific criticism and my faith is growing less and less . . . . Real criticism will always remain what it has always been, the free, living testimony of one mind regarding another, of one soul regarding another soul, *homo additus libris*. This most certainly does not mean, however, that it may not contain a large share, and in increasing amount, I do not wish to say of science (*science*), but rather of knowledge (*connaissance*); that is, precise and positive information and objective, impersonal investigation." (*Nouvelles Études sur Chateaubriand*).

The following two essays appeared in the oldest and most important French literary organ *La Revue des Deux Mondes,* of which M. Giraud has been for some time the secretary. *The French Miracle* was first published in the April number, 1915,—and later in book form together with other essays in 1915; the *Civilisation Française,* an essay on French Civilisation appeared in 1917 and won the *Prix d'Eloquence,* awarded by the Academy—it was later published separately and dedicated to the memory of Pierre Maurice Masson, a Professor in the University of Fribourg, a lieutenant in the infantry, who fell April 16, 1916, "in defense of the soil of Lorraine and French civilisation." In June, 1916, in the Sorbonne a posthumous degree of Doctor of Letters was conferred upon M. Masson for his remarkable thesis on Jean Jacques Rousseau, the proof of which he corrected in the trenches.

It has been a general belief held from the beginning of the war, by those who knew France, that on the outcome of the war depended the whole future of French civilization and consequently of all civilization. Our own President but lately, in that address which stands beyond praise, expressed those ideals of justice, of right and humanity upon which our national life depends and upon which the existence of all free peoples can alone thrive. These are the ideals expressed by M. Giraud in these essays and in more than one passage the reader will be reminded of the lofty words of our own President

and the high ideals he so admirably expressed. It is in the hope that this community of ideals may be more clearly understood and our debt to France, our moral debt especially, be more keenly appreciated, that these essays are presented in this country to a wider public than that which they might reach in their original form.

The translators are painfully aware that translations are not infrequently treacherous, traducing rather than transferring the thought; their one hope, however, is that in turning these essays into their mother tongue they may have done so without violating her genius, and yet, may have succeeded in preserving some slight traces of the charm, the warmth, and the vigor of the original.

Lest we forget. It is the story of yesterday and yet it seems the story of ages ago . . . .

But just when I recall to mind this story, when I attempt to state precisely the principal features of our moral, political and social situation immediately before the outbreak of the war, between the general elections in May and the thunderbolt which fell upon us in August, my pen wavers and I stop to reflect. God forbid that we should revive our old differences and disturb the truce that all the parties have made—the "sacred union" of the present moment. But the memory of these lingers in the minds of all and we need only allude to them. The least we can say is that we were thoroughly divided ten months ago. Our minds were perplexed, our consciences beclouded, our passions given free rein, and our evil fate did not spare us even those scandals which mark the end of a regime, like a symptom full of evil omen. Pessimists called it decadence. Optimists, those who, during the two preceding years, had thought they saw rising the dawn of a new France and had hailed the birth of a new spirit, wondered whether they were not mistaken or whether they should not wait for another generation before resuming their uncertain and timid hope.

Suddenly in this corrupt, troubled and stormy atmosphere, like a thunderbolt the war burst forth. And immediately a new France appeared: a France united, proud without bravado, calm and serious, the very one we had built up in our dreams and which we had almost despaired of ever seeing with our mortal eyes; a France which accepted without a murmur her fate as though for forty years she had been dreading this tragic day and had been preparing for it in silence. In the twinkling of an eye, all the pettiness of days gone by was forgotten and sunk deep in the past. To the profound astonishment of our enemies, even of our friends, and we must confess, to our own astonishment, all our dissensions vanished. The deplorable murder of an eloquent socialist orator (Jaurès) did not succeed in disturbing even for a moment that union which had sprung up so suddenly. The Chamber of Deputies had immediately risen above itself, and in a session never-to-be-forgotten, gave an example of concord, of patriotic wisdom and dignity which thrilled the hearts of all. The political leaders spoke the precise, strong and sober words which should be spoken, and their simple, terse and vigorous eloquence, worthy of the fairest days of Athens, was the finest homage that could be given the cause they were defending. Socialists, Conservatives, Monarchists and Republicans, representatives of every political theory; Catholics, Freethinkers, Israelites, Protestants, believers in every type of philosophy or religion;

noble and peasant, business man and workingman, all groups of society, were united, melted into one, lifted up and carried away, inspired by the same impulse. One feeling and one alone, one single thought swayed the mind of every Frenchman. Why did we think, even yesterday, of France as divided? There is but one France, the France that lives forever, thoroughly unified and completely united against the brutal aggressor. Never at any period in our history was our spiritual unity so complete, so profound, so intimate as on the morrow of the day when it seemed most imperilled.

How shall we explain that astounding change, that spontaneous springing up of a great common and national spirit, that sudden transfiguration of a whole people which we even yet behold in astonishment and wonder? Cold reason may not suffice; but it can account for certain aspects of this phenomenon.

That the conservative elements of French public opinion should welcome in a manly and firm manner the prospect of a European War should occasion no surprise. French Conservatives have, no doubt, their faults; but no one has been able seriously to challenge the sincerity and restless vigilance of their patriotism; had they been more frequently heeded there can be no doubt that France in 1914 would have been better prepared for the struggle. Many of them expected a war sooner or later; some could not tell whether they should hope for war or fear it; almost all prepared for it and also tried to prepare

public opinion for it. All, in any case, thoroughly convinced that a nation, according to Renan's profound expression is above all *"une création militaire,"* and deploring the fact that France no longer played the glorious rôle she formerly played in the world, put their supreme hope and their supreme thought in the army and counted upon it with every hope of victory, when the hour of national awakening should come. Royalists, Bonapartists, Nationalists, Progressists, Liberals, followers of tradition of every shade of political opinion deserve no special credit for immediately rallying to the colors; they deserve far greater credit for having immediately put aside the slight differences or serious divergences which separated them one from the other, and still more from those at the head of affairs, and for having unhesitatingly taken their stand around the representatives of a regime, the ways and methods of which they rejected and against which even yesterday they fought with might and main. We are willing to believe that their opponents in similar circumstances would have given proof of a like spirit of unselfishness.

For those who called themselves *"républicains de gauche"* radicals or radical-socialists the sacrifice was greater. How many of these proud descendants of the great ancestors of '93 had gradually drifted to the guileless fancies of pacifism, ranted against war, denounced the dangers of Nationalism and Militarism, protested against our colonial expansion, believed in the possibility of a friendly un-

derstanding with Germany, condemned the idea of *revanche,* and secretly in their hearts had surrendered our two lost provinces!

How many had rashly cut down the military budget, and even among those who became resigned to the three year service law, how many were preparing as soon as the opportunity should present itself, to undo what they had done? How many, finally, had in a thousand and one instances, shown a lack of confidence in the army or even open hostility to it, both ridiculous and dangerous as if every general had in him the making of a Bonaparte! All this prejudice, all this bias, hanging like clouds over our minds was swept away forever by the hurricane from the East. The spirit of grace breathed upon these apologists of the civil power and they awoke fervent patriots; they donned their uniforms, they submitted to the hard demands of discipline; deep in their hearts was revealed once more that spirit which animated the Volunteers of '92. And, indeed, the sight of their political friends wrestling, in these grave circumstances, with the difficulties and responsibilities of power, has in no wise weakened their sudden conversion. But after all they are converted and we can ask no more.

A conversion which should offer, it would seem, more difficulties but which took place nevertheless, is that of the various socialist and revolutionary groups. Let us admit this: when the first rumors of war began to circulate it was towards the Gener-

al Confederation of Labor that all eyes were turned in the greatest apprehension. That our fear was unfounded was proved by the outcome. But among the workingmen the gospel according to Marx had made so many converts; we had heard so often and so much about the class war, about the "International," about the claims of the proletariat and about the general strike. The war against war had been so often declared; Socialists and Revolutionists had cried out against the bourgeois social system and the prejudice that patriotism arouses. They had threatened so often to prevent mobilization by violence, to fire upon their officers, to disorganize national defense. And they professed a blind belief in social democracy. We may rest assured that our enemy, for they have shouted it from the housetops, counted on Jaurès to provoke another uprising, a second *Commune*. Like many others, this dream did not come true. Our Socialists did their full duty, as the German Socialists did theirs. Less logical than ours, and especially less frank, in any case under greater official pressure, the latter, we know so to-day, carefully avoided the offer of a friendly understanding between the laboring class of both countries with a view to making the war impossible. That action opened the eyes of the French "comrades." They realized that they had been deceived, and that to persevere in their revolutionary theories and fancies, would simply be playing the game of warlike and militaristic Germany. Quite convinced, moreover, that France had not wished

the war and that she had done everything to avoid it, they became convinced that to fight valiantly for her, was to fight for their own ideals, was to prepare the coming of perpetual peace and of the German Republic. Reassured as to the principles involved, they made ready to take up arms against the common enemy with as much serenity and enthusiasm as the most ardent Nationalist.

We can now easily picture to ourselves the diverse reasons which impelled the various parties which are striving to mould public opinion in France today, to rush unhesitatingly in one impetuous sweep to the defense of the frontier in danger. Some took up arms to defend the France of long ago, the France of the Crusades, of St. Louis, of Joan of Arc, France "the Eldest Daughter of the Church," whose mission is far from being fulfilled. Others took up arms for rationalistic and free-thinking France, the land of Voltaire and Diderot. Others, finally, fought for France the home of democracy and equality, the France of the Revolution, the land par excellence of social rights and political liberties. And all, instinctively, without any abstract theories, set out for the defense of France. Simply because it was France, the sweet, motherly land, their own native land, the land of their ancestors, the sacred spot of ground where their dead lie buried, where they themselves were born, where they lisped their first words, the land whose familiar horizons charmed their first gaze, mingled with all their joys and all their griefs, and because they could no long-

er live, if these fields, these woods, these cities which their ancestors had founded should fall into the hands of men of another race, coarse in manners, rude in speech, heavy and befogged in mind and vague in thought. And all this is true; all these explanations are correct and they must be given. But, that all these causes, apparent or deep-seated, which brought about French unanimity, should work together, that in the twinkling of an eye they should make a nation, but yesterday so divided, the least disciplined and at times the most anarchistic, a compact, intangible mass showing no signs of past division; that we should see this sacred union of minds, wills and hearts established, that before our eyes, as though by a sudden chemical reaction, a sort of sudden crystallization of the soul of France should come about, a thing which goes beyond and confounds our rational faculties, in all that I see the first French miracle.

II.

And there are other miracles. First and foremost must be placed the international and diplomatic situation of the conflict. Indeed it was better than we could have hoped for and such that we have had no reason to regret having waited patiently forty-four years for the hour of fate. When the world knows in detail the diplomatic history of these forty-four years it will know what forbearance, self-effac-

ment, self-possession, and stoic resignation France had to possess in order to resist the threats, the incessant provocations of German brutality. Mentioning only such facts as are universally known, no one can reproach our country with having sought eagerly an opportunity for *revanche*. Willingly, systematically so that the world might not accuse us of disturbing the peace of the world to satisfy any national rancour we might feel, we were ready to make every concession compatible with our dignity, each time there arose between Germany and ourselves a question that was purely personal. If war finally broke out, it is because Germany declared war against us. And if we made up our minds so promptly as to what we were to do, it was first of all because it was a question of not allowing a small heroic people to be crushed by an empire drunk with ambition and devoid of any scruple. Consequently, without any seeking on our part, France appeared in the eyes of all in the very attitude which could most harmonize with her ancient traditions: she was a victim because she was attempting to set another free; she was attacked because she had been unwilling to allow the commission of an act of international injustice.

This noble attitude had its immediate reward. Russia, which the Germans by their bungling policy had so completely succeeded in throwing into our arms, Russia, whose just cause we were espousing, was going to use all her strength in the service of our common interests. Italy under other circum-

stances might have given us reason to fear on account of her obligations to the Central Powers; but our adversaries in dealing with Italy exhibited a lack of frankness and tact; consequently, she declared herself neutral and very soon after affirmed that this neutrality could be for her only a provisional attitude. There remained England which in truth for the past ten years had been drawing closer to us in a very cordial manner and whose general interests were clearly identical with our own. But England, pacifist by instinct, a prey to serious internal disorders and moreover quite open to German influence, was divided against herself. The fate of Servia was for her an object of very remote concern. The hateful violation of the neutrality of Belgium put an end to her hesitation. English loyalty and English interests happened to coincide and England in her anger inflicted upon Germany a surprise from which she has not yet recovered. By her duplicity, by her violence, by her lack of foresight, Germany herself completed the "encircling" which she had long been dreading as the greatest of misfortunes. France, on the contrary, by her loyalty, her prudence, and the generous spirit of her methods, thanks also to the skill of her diplomats, was in a moral and material position perhaps unique in the whole course of her history. The situation which ended in the fall of Napoleon was now, a hundred years later, reversed, and in favor of France. While her implacable enemy was being deserted, alliances were coming to her. And by a real

symbolical coincidence, at the very moment when she was defending the freedom of the world, and, we may say without boasting, the cause of Christian civilization, she was at the same time fighting for her own existence, for the future of her own genius, and for the hope of reparation, which for nearly half a century she had been jealously treasuring in her heart.

To maintain this rôle, to fulfill such a mission and not be crushed thereby, to justify also so much hope and deserve such confidence, material strength and power of soul were necessary, of which many, even among our friends, did not believe France entirely capable. They knew her to be insufficiently prepared, courageous to be sure, but nervous, quick to be disillusioned, more capable of enthusiasm than endurance. And they knew that the adversary was formidable, admirably equipped and that for forty years he had been training for this war which he had let loose. They knew that he would be the more violent and the more pitiless because, while feeling himself threatened in his very existence, anxious about the future, he had suffered disappointments in diplomacy which had ruffled his pride and shaken his security. They knew in short that eager to accomplish his purpose and forced to strike, at the very first, blows that would be decisive, he would turn almost all his efforts against France, which was to be crushed and conquered at any cost within a few weeks.

Let us recall to mind the telling article in the London Times: "There were days and days during the swift German advance when we feared that the French armies were no match for the German, that Germany would be conquered on the seas and from her eastern frontier and that after the war France would remain a power only through the support of her Allies." Our friends might have been still more anxious in their fear had they known as we are beginning to know now all the mysterious details of the extraordinary preparedness of the Germans, all the infinite resources our enemy possessed in men, in war material, in spies, particularly perhaps in spies, their wonderful genius for organization, their absolute lack of scruple, their faith in their superiority in all things, exulting in the unfailing success of their arms. In turn we now realize the reasons for their unhealthy pride, their hymns of triumph before the victory, their shouts like Barbarians falling on the spoils; between France and them the match was not an even one. All the probabilities, all the chances were that France would be overwhelmed by the number of soldiers, by the fire of shells lavishly spent, by the superiority of arms and equipment perfected according to the very last word of science.

However, without excitement, without losing self-control, France completed her final preparations for war. This impressive calmness, this quiet, serious dignity immediately inspired confidence in the most pessimistic. Those who have not seen with their

own eyes the good order, precision and rapidity with which the mobilisation was accomplished, will never know how easily the French temperament complies with the requirements of method. I imagine the numberless spies of Emperor William must have been very much surprised and if they succeeded in getting truthful reports to their master they must have admitted in such reports that things could not have gone off more smoothly even in methodical Germany. Personally I shall always have before my eyes a double picture of the first days of war. It was the second day of mobilisation, in a suburban train which was carrying a number of soldiers to Paris. It was a pleasure to see their determination, and their high spirits. At one of the stations an old general, with a pure white moustache, boarded the train and had evidently just returned to duty. The men outdid themselves in courtesy, offering him their seats, insisting that he sit down, but he refused and remained standing during the whole trip, engaging in conversation. In that tone of cordial and familiar simplicity which even a German lieutenant could never assume he carried on the conversation, replying to the remarks of this one and that one, saying that we did not want the war, that it was forced upon us and that each one must do his duty, that there would be days of trial when everybody, himself included, would suffer from hunger and thirst and lack of sleep, but that France was well worth all these sacrifices . . . . And as he talked, expressing the thought of all, we experienced some-

thing like a foretaste of that close and trustful solidarity which during the war has sprung up between the French trooper and his chief of which we have since had so many examples. When the train stopped there were handshakes and good wishes exchanged; the officer had won over all his men; to-morrow, under fire, he would be able to lead them anywhere.

Meanwhile, a young man came into our compartment who had been accompanied thus far by his wife, carrying a baby in her arms; they gave each other one long embrace; the wife was wonderful in her simplicity and calmness; not a tear; in that countenance, somewhat pale, you could see that strong, almost tragic determination not to give way to emotion; and I shall never forget that vigorous and tender way with which she held out the baby to its father for one last kiss. Ah! those Germans who thought we were a people whose end had come, how mistaken they were!

Who of us has not had impressions similar to these which at the very outset filled our hearts with so much hope? Here among many others is one of the experiences of Emile Faguet:

"11 Aug. Trains are passing by loaded with soldiers who are going back to their regiments. Too many in my opinion are singing and shouting aloud. But many of them are quiet and determined, very simple in manner, with a look of decision in their eyes. In short, they are full of confidence themselves, and inspire it in others. You feel that they

are ready for anything and afraid of nothing. Lord, in their coarse linen tunics and their twilled trousers, Lord, how handsome they are! Their speech is not confused or boastful: 'It won't be long, but in any case as long as need be,' 'When each one is sure of all the others, it is all right.' French good sense and French courage are in each one of their words. Brave fellows!"

Deceived by our moderation, our reserve, our conciliatory spirit, during the last forty years, the Germans imagined that we would be afraid of war. Once more they were thoroughly mistaken.

They were also greatly mistaken with regard to a people extremely peaceful, but very jealous of their independence and who had in their past history a record of heroism of which they were justly proud. Not counting on certain complications, judging others by herself, unaccustomed to give any weight to the sentiment of honor, Germany was convinced that Belgium would not dare resist her, but would limit herself to making a purely formal protest. But Belgium had a king worthy of her, a king in whose veins moreover flowed French blood. King Albert energetically declared that he would defend the neutrality of his country. Germany in her surprise and fury, checked in her mad rush onward, took two weeks to break that obstacle, unforeseen and for us providential. That was indeed for France the beginning of her salvation. What would have happened if, on the very first days of the month of August, in the midst of the mobilisation of the

French troops, the barbarian horde crossing Belgium unhindered, had been able to come down fullweight on our northern frontier? Could we have withstood long enough that first shock so as to permit our troops in the interior to concentrate and bring relief? One thing is certain, namely, that the Belgians by their wonderful resistance, worthy of all praise, delayed the German offensive and succeeded in stamping the "treacherous blow" of our enemy as a deed of hateful cowardice, the shame of which they will never be able to wipe out; thus they gave us a new ally and at the same time a precious breathing spell, and in contrast to our enemies, raised us in the eyes of the civilised world, to the most desirable and the most beautiful moral position: as the champion of the right, keeper of a plighted word, incorruptible representative of eternal justice. In this respect particularly, history was indeed working in the best interests of France.

III.

Still the great question which filled us with anguish remained: Could France resist, without giving way, the terrible onslaught of these three million men methodically trained, armed to the teeth with the most deadly engines of war, and aroused against the hereditary foe from their childhood, in their loftiest feelings as well as in their lowest instincts? Against an adversary thus equipped, valor,

noble-mindedness, idealism, are not strong enough weapons. Physical force is needed. Would France have that physical strength? She did not have the numbers; her armament disclosed serious gaps; she was not prepared for the type of war which was to be waged against her. Fortunately she did have a wonderful gun, a high command originally somewhat heterogeneous, but which could easily become of the very first order; finally, an army which had faith—faith in the destiny of France and in the infinite resources of French genius. But would all that be sufficient? Our friends were anxious: M. Ferrero, M. Seippel, and the eloquent author of the article in the London Times have since admitted it. They were justly frightened on our account by the size, by the brutality, by the heavy armor of the German colossus. It was the fight between David and Goliath over again. Who was going to win? The world held its breath. Through the importance of the questions involved, through the enormity of the forces engaged, never did a more stupendous, more terrible struggle arouse all mankind.

After the first few fortunate passes, David gave way before his fearful adversary. That was the battle of Charleroi. The anxiety increased throughout the world. Would we be able to recover from that repulse? The enemy was exultant. He found in his triumph the justification for his crime. His leaders had not deceived him. He was going to tread upon that promised land whose riches his chiefs had so often held out before him. A few

days more and he would be in that Paris of which he had been dreaming since childhood in his uncouth way, the pillaging of which had been held out before him to satisfy his hungry greed. A few days more and the Emperor would enter that superb city which had always rejected his advances and the humiliation and destruction of which he had sworn. The sudden attack with which he so often threatened us seemed about to succeed.

Then it was that a great leader arose up among us. The Commander in Chief of the French armies was scarcely known except to his immediate colleagues who appreciated at their real value his ability, his vigor, his rough but kindly justice, and his prodigious self-control. With admirable clearness he saw the situation in its true light and without striking a blow he knew immediately what decision had to be made, however difficult it might be. He realized that the one thing which had to be saved and maintained intact and free to move was the army on which depended the victories to come. Sacrificing all the generals who did not measure up to their tasks, sacrificing a large strip of national territory, he retreated. He retreated rapidly, methodically, checking the enemy as he went along and inflicting on him bloody losses, thus weakening him, tiring him, wearing him out in every way, clearing the way before him, forestalling his plans, making good use of his savage impatience, watching for his slightest mistakes, drawing him on little by little, to

the ground where the fight might take place under conditions most favorable to our troops. On the fifth of September these conditions were fulfilled. The command for the offensive was given in an order for the day, the manly and sober eloquence of which will remain forever famous. France was to be saved.

And during this time France showed that she was worthy of her soldiers and her leaders. While Northern and Eastern France accepted in trembling, but without complaint, the brutal invasion, Paris, after all precautions had been taken, remained admirable in her quiet dignity. Paris attended to business, in a more serious way to be sure than usual, but without excitement, and with that air of elegant fearlessness, which is characteristic of French courage. Paris was waiting. For what? She did not know. She knew but one thing, namely, that she would be defended to the last. She was placed under a military governor, who was one of those generals trained in the hard school of our colonial wars, like Joffre and Lyautey, men of thought and action, and who are able to prepare for battles and win them, and at the same time to organize and govern a country. A most fortunate choice, if it is true that the army of Paris contributed in a most definite manner to the victory of the Marne. Paris was confident because she was defended by Galliéni. But she was prepared for anything, knowing as she did that the fortifications of her entrenched camp were temporarily insufficient. From

day to day, from hour to hour she listened attentively to the boom of the cannon which was not far off. One morning she learned that the German danger was passing away, and that just as fifteen hundred years before, the barbarian hordes for no apparent reason, were turning away from the capital and marching to the fatal meeting on the fields around Châlons. Paris was saved. Paris understood the mystery of her deliverance no more than she had that of fifteen centuries before. I dare say that this mystery is to-day more incomprehensible than was that of fifteen hundred years ago. For it would be impossible to compare even very superficially the Paris of the days of Atilla with the Paris of our day. We are not certain that it was a mistake on the part of the king of the Huns to have neglected to take and put to sack the valiant city which was to play such a rôle in the future, and in any case if it was a mistake, it was one which did not compromise in any way the success of his campaign; for it was of infinitely greater importance for him to take Orleans, the key to the south, and as a matter of fact it was upon this city that he let loose his howling pack. But what was true of Atilla was not true of his present successor. To take Paris and dictate peace to us, before Russia could be ready; such was the main goal of Emperor William, as his generals had told us sufficiently often. That was the only reason for this immense array of forces on our northern frontier, for the violation of Belgian neutrality, for those forced marches of the German

right wing, and certainly that was well calculated. Even without the lure of a government to capture, a bank of France to rifle, Paris still remained a very desirable prey for the greed of those beyond the Rhine. Certainly the taking of Paris would not mean the end of France, nor the end of the war, nor final victory. We would still have left armies, money, allies and courage. But not to mention the great moral effect this would produce on the outside world, it must be admitted that the loss of our capital would have made it more difficult for us to win that glorious peace to which we have a right. Still it is quite true that Paris would not have given up without a struggle. But Paris, aside from her army, was not at that time protected as she might have been and as she should have been; this the Germans knew; if they did not, of what use were their armies of spies?

A swift, violent and sudden attack, a bold and lucky stroke, one of those blows in which the Germans do not count human lives, might succeed. And then the distant dream of a German Caesar would be realized; then he would have one of those triumphal entries which had been denied him; and his army of pillagers and incendiaries would enjoy that orgy of blood which had so often been promised them. And suddenly without anyone knowing why, that dream for which they had sacrificed everything, vanished into thin air through their own fault. All of a sudden these daring warriors lose their daring, hesitate, retrace their steps and turn aside, and these

conquerors, of their own volition, thrust from their parched lips the enchanted cup from which they were about to drink.

I fully realize that in their minds this was merely postponed, not given up altogether; I know all the explanations that have been given for this movement of the German right wing, whereby General Von Kluck, exposing his flank, instead of marching directly on to Paris, turned towards Meaux and Coulommiers. I am willing to admit that it might seem imprudent to him to attempt an attack on Paris without first of all disposing of General Maunoury's army and the armies of General Joffre, which were after all still intact. But on the one hand, in a war the success of which might be a question of hours, this amounted to giving the capital time to complete and organize her defense; and on the other hand, in case of a check, it meant precluding every possibility of a future offensive against the great city which was the object of the Emperor's ambition. And I know full well that in their foolish pride the Germans had no doubt about their victory. But that the enemy's high command should not even have considered the opposite possibility, that a general staff which even when it is sure of success, takes precaution against a possible reverse, should have been thoughtless enough to risk on one single throw of the dice the entire future of their Western campaign, that it should make the strategic mistake of permitting our Commander in Chief, not so much to resume the offensive because the offensive had

been decided upon long before this mistake was made, but to resume the offensive under the best possible conditions, that is what confuses me, that is what I do not understand—and they say that even our own Joffre himself does not understand it. Perhaps when we know the German explanation we shall understand it better.

Moreover, there is no doubt that the contest to be waged was not only likely to be decisive but was also of a nature to inspire a certain amount of confidence in an army even less presumptuous than was the German army. In that astounding retreat, like one of Turenne's, which our Commander in Chief imposed upon the entire French army, and the execution of which dumbfounded the experts, our troops ran the risk of losing some of their most precious and incontestible qualities. Subjected to unspeakable fatigue, how could they recover the fire, the dash, the "bite" of which they had at the beginning given such proof? On the other hand, the French soldier does not like to fight and retreat at the same time; and especially when he does not understand the reasons for the movements ordered, as was often the case, he is likely to lose his nerve and his courage. And yet strangely enough nothing like this happened. As if in the hands of a skillful captain our national temperament had received a new stamp, our soldiers preserved all their confidence and all their dash; and when on the morning of the sixth of September they were told, the salvation of the country was going to depend on their effort and that they "should at any

cost hold the ground gained and be slain on the spot rather than retreat," realizing the full meaning of these heroic words, happy at last to be themselves again, they turned upon the enemy with that legendary fury for which we have so often been glorified.

But, however great their valor, it was to be feared that it would dash itself and break upon a foe altogether too fearful. We do not know the exact respective strength of the troops engaged on both sides, but we do know that we were numerically inferior; and it seems that frequently we were forced to fight one against four or five. In the second place, and even though since the battle of Charleroi, thanks to the wonders of French manufactories, we had had time to fill up certain gaps in equipment, our armament remained inferior to that of our adversary: neither in mitrailleuses, nor in heavy artillery, nor in munition reserves, could we yet be compared with him. Finally, he had that self-confidence which comes from pride, skilfully maintained and the intoxication of first victory. More than ever our friends were anxious. Looking at it rationally, they were right.

How did the heroic valor of our army and the superiority of our generals and of our light artillery finally make our victory certain? This is easier to state than to explain. Mathematically, if you will allow me to say so, we ought to have been conquered. We are forced to believe that in the art of war as well as in all other arts the geometrical mind has to give way before finesse, calculation before in-

tuition, reason before sentiment. This army which was fighting against the invader in defense of the native soil and the genius of France had a different ideal from that which inspired that other army which was fighting for "honor," no doubt, but also and especially for the physical well-being of Germany—those are the very words in the German order of the day. This French army did not have on its conscience all those crimes against the rights of humanity which will be, in the eyes of history, the everlasting shame of the German army; let us pronounce the verdict: it had a higher moral standard. That is why it deserved to win. That is why it did win. Was it not General Nogi who uttered that profound thought that in every battle victory comes to him who is able to hold out a quarter of an hour longer than his foe? It would seem that the victors of the Marne made this their motto and that they wished to furnish a striking illustration of it. Just when generals like Maunoury, Foch, Dubail with their soldiers decimated, exhausted, assailed on all sides by superior forces might have lost courage, they nevertheless persevered in their determination to keep up the offensive, and together with their soldiers were willing to suffer still more; and then it was that they saw the enemy disconcerted and less firm, break off the battle and begin a retreat, which at more than one point degenerated into a rout. Let us read once more the stirring order of the day which General

Maunoury, on the day after the victory, addressed to the army of Paris, but which applies equally well to the whole French Army:

"The Sixth Army has just sustained for five whole days without interruption or lull, the struggle against the foe in great numbers, whose success had up to that time heightened his morale. The struggle was hard; the losses on the firing line, the fatigue, due to loss of sleep and sometimes food, have surpassed the powers of imagination; you have endured everything with valor, firmness and endurance which cannot properly be glorified by mere words."

It was truly an epic struggle, which in the opinion of experts will remain numbered among the five or six great events in our military history. We do not know all the details, even the important ones. At most we are able from certain essential episodes to perceive the movement and rhythm of it. But that is sufficient to make us realize all the bravery, obstinacy and strategic skill displayed by the foe, and the heroism, patient energy and military talent displayed by our men. Privates and officers were equally worthy of admiration. The privates have been called upon in the name of their country to do more than their duty; their reply to this, went beyond the seemingly possible. As for the officers it is impossible to say which we must admire most in them, the initiative and dash with which they fought

the enemy directly confronting them, watching his every move, on the lookout for any weakness, taking advantage of it at the precise moment when they could profit by it; or the compliant spirit and strict discipline with which they conformed to the instructions of the Commander in Chief, scrupulously carrying out his plans, applying and developing his thought, even forestalling it and submitting to it in advance, in perfect harmony with him in method and intent. It was a close and fruitful collaboration which brought to bear on one and the same object all individual energy and effort and which made the victory of the Marne one of the most powerful collective works, the success of which is conditioned by the necessary utilization of many strong personalities. In our victory, what was the part played by a Galliéni, a Foch, a Castelnau, a Maunoury, a Dubail? We do not yet know with absolute precision, we simply feel that it was considerable and that if one or the other of these commanders, to mention only those, had not acted as he did, instead of a decisive victory, perhaps we should have had to deplore a reverse. Never before on such a vast battlefield had such powerful masses of men been led and manoeuvered with such mastery by more brilliant generals, more closely united and possessing such thorough military science. The historians of the future will probably say that the battle of the Marne was one of the masterworks of French genius.

We rejoiced and were proud on account of this

complete and incontestable victory—the revenge for 1870—for which we have been waiting for forty-four years—but our pride and our joy were accompanied by extreme modesty and rare selfpossession. I do not believe that Paris, at last safe from invasion, the danger of which she realized perfectly, displayed a single extra flag. Paris did not imitate Berlin which after the battle of Charleroi displayed flags and bunting in frantic profusion. The Prussian spies who may still have been in Paris must have found it impossible to believe their eyes. Paris, nervous and throbbing Paris, was silent in her joy. Questioned by the civil authorities in regard to illumination to celebrate the victory, General Joffre replied in those admirable words, worthy of a Turenne or a Vauban: "No, our losses have been too great." And Paris was of the same opinion as the Commander in Chief. This race which had been so often reproached by its enemies for its swagger and bluster and which certainly does not dislike a little display looked on with smiling serenity at this sudden and complete turn of fortune. Among the events of the last ten months perhaps not the least surprising has been this spontaneous transformation in the national temperament. This complete absence of exaltation and that self-restraint maintained in both good and bad fortune.

IV.

For it was indeed during those heroic days, during the battle of the Marne that fortune decidedly veered about, that hope changed camps, never again to abandon us. The moral superiority, which our troops displayed in contrast to the opposing forces in those bloody battles, they have not lost since; in fact, they are increasingly conscious of it. The charm was broken. That formidable German army which was considered invincible, because it had conquered us in 1870 and which believed itself invincible, and boasted of it, had just now been beaten beyond all expectations. The offensive was broken; and whatever efforts, even though at times furious, the German army has since made, to resume the offensive, whatever partial success it may have obtained here and there, and which could be but temporary, whatever success it may yet obtain, it can neither pierce our line, nor envelop any one of our armies or force us to yield any considerable ground. On the contrary it is the German army which has nearly always been obliged to give way under pressure from us and which to offer greater resistance has inaugurated that system of trench warfare which has lasted for more than eight months and which we also have been forced to adopt.

No system of warfare seemed *a priori* less adapted to the French temperament, and no doubt beyond the Rhine they were counting on this to tire

our patience and to force upon us what they call "an honorable peace" but which would have brought little honor to us and in any case would have been singularly precarious. Let us confess: We had some misgivings with regard to our soldiers in this test of an entirely new type of warfare, for which they apparently had been but slightly prepared. A French soldier does not enjoy digging up the ground, any more than he enjoys beating a retreat. Bold and brilliant offensive warfare, warfare of swift and skilful manoeuvres, we had up to that time considered his real element. How little we knew about the elasticity, the suppleness of the French character, its astonishing powers of assimilation and adaption; in short, its plasticity! In a very short time our soldiers were able to build trenches as ingenious and as comfortable as those of the Germans; peasants, as many of them were, they derived a certain pleasure in handling their native soil; and, however hard their life was in the frozen mud, in the rain, under fire, with that peaceful stoicism, that persistent patience, that playful, mocking, good humor which flourished in our countryside, they rivalled their foes in endurance, and, finally, in the war of attrition the Germans had no greater success than in the other. The fact that our troopers regretted sometimes the old fashioned French type of warfare makes their abnegation still more touching and more admirable.

"Six months of mole-like warfare which lacks the excitement of triumphal marches, waving

plumes, glorious battles won by fighting on the surface of the ground, marching thrilled by music and songs of victory! Six months which are only the greater and more glorious because they have torn from the war all her grandeur and all her chivalry! Six months of war waged against wild boars in their lairs, whom the broad daylight and the fair fight, with equal arms, face to face, chest to chest, seemed to fill with dread."

These were the words in which a colonel recently expressed himself in a private letter. We know from all the testimony coming to us from the front that this mole-like warfare has been just as productive as the other type of warfare in deeds of heroism, in unpublished acts of courage and in sublime self-sacrifice. Moreover, since the battle of the Marne, siege warfare has been the general characteristic of the struggle. We know that this type of warfare has admitted of exceptions in which much blood has been shed. More than once the German armies have attempted to resume the offensive on one point or another of the front. Everywhere and always they have found before them, with a command always ready, troops often inferior in number, but quite determined to allow themselves to be slain on the spot rather than retreat. There is nothing more honorable to the French army than the battles of Ypres and of the Yser where our soldiers stopped the drive on Calais by making of themselves an insurmountable barrier. In this war which has brought about a revival of

French heroism there is perhaps no more glorious feat than the defense of Dixmude against three German army corps by our six thousand marine fusiliers aided by five thousand Belgians. The race of valiant heroes is not yet extinct and there is reason to believe that our enemies will speak less readily of the decadence of the French.

We, however, if we do not speak of decadence, we may mention at least the mad presumption and the lack of foresight on the part of the Germans. From the material point of view they had prepared, up to the minutest detail, for a war which was to be a short one. Full of confidence in brute strength, they had entirely neglected to prepare for a war from the diplomatic side, and in spite of all the warnings loyally given, it was a terrible surprise to them to see England intervene in the conflict. They had outrageously scorned all the power of public opinion, leaving to victory the task of justifying their actions, as Maximilian Harden said; and in spite of their unbridled propaganda among neutrals, they saw little by little the public opinion of the entire world turned against them. To break all opposition they relied on human cowardice and systematically spread abroad terror; the only feelings they have succeeded in arousing, are horror, indignation, hatred outspoken and avenging that cannot be stilled. They desired to wear out the adversary's determination and succeeded only in extending it beyond all known limits. Having failed in their brusque attack they endeavored to prolong the

struggle by resorting to underground warfare; and they failed to realize that in this way they were making day by day more and more formidable the blockade which they had been unable to avoid, and that they were giving to their enemies time to make up for their lack of previous preparation, and while they were wearing themselves out in a futile and inglorious way, the enemy had time to pile up and throw against them forces under the weight of which they could not fail to perish. The miracle of the French victory has as a counterpart the marvel of German stupidity.

We, in France, as well as our allies, knew how to make use of the respite, German lack of prudence had granted us. We were all of us wrong to allow ourselves to be surprised by a war for which our enemy had spent forty-four years in preparation and planning, and about which we had been thinking not even forty-four months. In eight months almost all the lost time was made up. Some day we shall know in detail the prodigious effort which all France expended in improvising, in inventing and in action in these ten months. Without underestimating, in the least, all she owed to her allies, we shall have to confess that France was her own savior. At the beginning of the war we were in more than one respect much inferior to the foe; we are now at least equal to him, often superior; and yet, his factories and arsenals have not been idle a single day in the last ten months. We are told that our heavy artillery is his despair to-day, just as much

as our field artillery; and if at times our munition reserves have been insufficient in the past, we are able now to be as prodigal with our shot and shell as he was at the beginning against us—without the fearful prospect of copper failing us some day.

The foregoing facts, which are to-day familiar to every sensible Frenchman, justify the lighthearted endurance of which our soldiers have given ample proof in the trenches and the patience which has scarcely ever deserted the civilian population during these ten months of war and invasion; but perhaps they may not explain them entirely. Reason and common sense are ample proof of this every day. Endurance and patience which were considered German virtues were not considered up to this time as characteristics of the French. Must we see in them entirely new qualities never before displayed, sprung out of this great crisis through a sort of spontaneous creation? Or are they qualities hidden up to the present time in the obscure depths of the stored-up energy of our race and which had not yet had an opportunity to manifest themselves? Or are the acquired qualities which simply show how wonderfully easy it is for the French temperament to be transformed? Whether we choose one or the other of these hypotheses, one thing is certain and one fact undeniable. Poorly or at least insufficiently prepared for a frightful war, the success of which depended almost entirely on her powers of resistance, since she was to withstand

the first shock almost alone, France did stand her ground; she held out with heroic vigor, wily tenacity, and unconquerable patience on which her friends and we ourselves perhaps at certain moments scarcely dared to count. She has shown that she deserves all the admiration showered on her in the past and justified all the hope placed in her for the future.

It is certain also that France has just lived through an incomparable period of her history. I doubt that there has been any more decisive since the days of Joan of Arc. In both cases the very life of the country was at stake: "To be or not to be," that was the question. The critical point in the fifteenth century was whether France was to be a vassal of England or not and in the twentieth century whether she was to be a vassal of Germany. The second crisis was of a nature to cause us to shudder more than the first. What humiliation, what a retrogression, what a downfall for a Frenchman of to-day to become a German! If this monstrous nightmare had become a reality, what Frenchman would have found any joy thereafter in life? France so clearly felt the full seriousness of this threat that she rose up to her full grandeur, filled with indignation, loathing and fright. Germany thought she was going to find another Poland to dismember; but she had to deal with a nation united, resolute and under discipline, with leaders who were obeyed. All the strength and trickery of Germany were unable to break this rigid, living union of de-

termined minds. Once more France stood up as a moral being determined to live, worthy of life, a being whose life the world needs. For forty-four years France, bruised, humiliated, mutilated, fallen from the rank of a first-rate power, no longer spoke in the councils of Europe that proud and generous language which she was wont to speak in days gone by; and the world has been able to notice that the standard of international morality had appreciably declined, and that the great causes of idealism now seldom found a champion. After forty-four years the opportunity came to her to give her full true measure, to take once more with her old prestige the rank which an accidental defeat had made her lose and to reconquer full liberty for her civilising mission. France replied manfully to the call of destiny. She accepted with serene and grave confidence the wager Providence gave her. She has already more than half won that wager. Aided by her powerful and generous allies she will finally, while freeing herself, liberate the universe from the hateful and brutal yoke which has been weighing upon it. In that world where for a half century force alone has ruled she will strive, following her age-long tradition, to bring nearer the reign of justice. She will cast away that frame of mind characteristic of the conquered which has been the real cause of her internal discord; the sacred union which has been her strength against the enemy must survive victory.

Oh, you young men, lying in the plains of the Marne, of Alsace or of Flanders, you have given your lives heroically for that great work of reparation, to create a larger France, a France respected by the world and in perfect unity in a purified Europe where peace reigns. This spectacle which you will not see we want to last in the world for ages. We would not be worthy of you, if hereafter by our own hand we tear ourselves asunder. We ought not to have accepted your sacrifice, if we were determined to make it of no avail by our obstinate persistency in our old and absurd quarrels. No, your blood shall not have been shed in vain. We have fully realized the austere lesson which you have taught us, for you died united in brotherly love. We shall continue, we shall complete your work. If in spite of grief, of misery and ruin we are proud to have lived through the hours we have just lived through it is because we are certain that France in victory will be able to prolong the miracle of France.

(1) Among the many admirable letters published, I cannot refrain from citing here a few lines from a letter found on the body of Jean Chatanay, lieutenant in the reserves, killed at Vermelles, October 15, 1914:

My Dear:

I am writing this chance letter because you can never tell. If it reaches you, it will be because France will have needed me to the very end. You must not weep, because I swear, I shall die happy, if I must give up my life for her.

My only worry is the hard situation in which you and the children will be left. How will you be able to provide for your own future and that of the children? Fortunately you are able to count on your old position as teacher and on full aid from my people. How glad I should be to know that some provision is to be made.

I am not disturbed about the bringing up of the little girls, you will bring them up as I would have done myself, I hope that they will be able to make themselves independent, something that I intended to do if I lived. The one great difficulty will be Zette, for it will be hard, if not impossible for you, to live in Paris. You will kiss the dear little ones for their father. You will tell them that he has gone on a long, long journey, still loving them, thinking of them and protecting them from afar. I should like to have Cotte at least remember me, and there will be a little baby, a tiny baby, whom I shall not have seen. If it is a boy, my wish is that he become a doctor; unless, however, after this war France still needs officers. You will tell him when he has reached the age of understanding that his father gave up his life for a great ideal, that of our country, reconstituted and strong.

I think, I have said what is most important. Farewell, my dear, my love, promise me that you won't harbor ill will towards France, if she wanted me and all of me. Promise me, too, that you will console father and mother, and tell the little girls that their father, however far away he may be, will never cease to watch over them and love them. We shall meet again some day, united once more, I hope, with Him who guides our lives and has given me near you and through you such happiness. Poor dear one, I have not had time to dwell long upon our love, which nevertheless is so great and so strong. Farewell till we meet again, the great, the real meeting. Be strong. YOUR JOHN.

Jean Chatanay, former Normalien was Chief of the Entomological Station at Châlons-sur-Marne. He was thirty years old.

(2) Among all the deeds of heroism and all the epic words which have been reported by our soldiers, I scarcely know one more beautiful, more worthy of going down to posterity, than the following:

In a captured trench, which was being reconstructed, a shower of bombs suddenly burst; ten men fell, the others dropped back and a score of Germans invaded the trench. Then, one of the wounded men got up and seizing a hand full of grenades, uttered this sublime cry: "Arise ye dead!" At his call three other wounded soldiers arose, and with guns, grenades and bayonets they struck down half of their assailants and forced the rest to flee.

The hero of this deed is Lieutenant Péricard, author of a recent book: *Face à Face. Souvenirs et Impressions d'un soldat de la Grande Guerre.* Préface de Maurice Barrès, Paris, 1916. Another volume has just appeared by the same author: *Ceux de Verdun.* Paris, 1917.

FRENCH CIVILISATION

Plus je vis l'étranger, plus j'aimai ma patrie.—Du Bellay.

Et plus je suis Français, plus je me sens humain.—Sully Prudhomme.

To symbolise what seems to me to be the original and fundamental quality, the constant tradition of French civilisation, I should not care to seek a better expression than the remark of a non-commissioned Prussian officer in the novel entitled *Au Service de l'Allemagne*: "Ah, sir, we really must admit the French have more humanity than the others."

In literature to begin with. Is literature the expression of society? It is, in any case, because it is the least systematic, the most spontaneous expression of the peculiar genius and instinctive tendencies of the people.

That there is in French literature more humanity than in the other modern literatures would be, I think, the conclusion of even a superficial examination of these various literatures. Our writers are not such great artists as the Italians, are less mystical than the Russians, less poetical than the English, less philosophical than the Germans, less romantic than the Spaniards but how much more human! It is of man they think, first of all; it is man in his different moral attitudes, in the deep-seated movements of his nature, whom they strive to under-

stand and describe; the questions which they treat are human questions, moral or social questions. What they have always in view is the practice of life —individual or collective—and, finally, it is man to whom they speak, the concrete, the real, the living man, not the exceptional, but the average man, whose language they speak and whose approval they seek. To instruct, to moralise, in a word, to humanise that is their essential purpose. We remember what Bossuet said of the Greek poets: "Homer and so many other poets whose words are as pleasing as they are serious, celebrate only the arts that are useful to human life, breathe only the spirit of the public good, fatherland, society and that wonderful civic consciousness which we have explained." This might be the very definition of French literature.

Let us make this general impression clearer. Let us examine the two great epochs of our history, the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries which we are in the habit of considering as opposed one to the other and not without reason; for, in truth, just as the Seventeenth Century loved order, rule and discipline, to the same degree the Eighteenth rebelled against all authority, religious, intellectual and political. But, if, after going beyond these undeniable divergencies, we, finally, come to the bottom of the matter we are bound to realise that through different methods they affirm and pursue the same ideal.

The French literature of the Seventeenth Century was passionately curious about the human soul; that

is, it seems, its distinctive characteristic which explains not only its own peculiar merits, but also its weakness and shortcomings. It has been reproached, for instance, with having disdained nature; it is because it constantly concerned itself with man, that it neglected all that is not man. To see living, with the eyes of the soul, and to present, exactly, that "marvelously vain, shifting and changing creature" seemed to that century a spectacle which made all others grow pale; a task compared with which all others were but diversions. "It might be well," said Pascal, "not to penetrate too deeply into the opinion of Copernicus, but it is of the greatest importance to our entire life to know whether the soul is mortal or immortal." In like manner Racine might have said: "Of what importance to us is the setting in which the tragic story of Phaedra is unfolded? What interests us is Phaedra's soul, how she reacts against the mad passion by which she is possessed and obsessed, the shifting changes of her moral consciousness, and what physical landscape can compare with this *paysage intérieur?*" All the writers of the Seventeenth Century held the same opinion as Racine. All of them, poets, dramatists, orators, novelists, philosophers made the human heart their one object of study; all tried to encompass in their work the greatest amount of moral observation possible. Hence, the wealth of psychology in their work. "A living psychology," Taine's celebrated definition does not apply to every sort of

literature, but it does apply most aptly to the literature of the Seventeenth Century.

It will be noticed that our great classic writers, although very penetrating, were not, however, disinterested psychologists. Knowledge for the mere sake of knowledge, even though it were the most interesting of realities is not their ideal. Their attitude toward man is not at all that of the naturalist, or of the scientist, who observes, jots down facts, establishes laws, and, when this work is done, thinks his mission accomplished. They are moralists as much as they are psychologists. They are not satisfied with studying and knowing man, they propose to furnish him with a rule of life; they wish him to be better and happier. From their long journey of exploration and study, they return without any illusion regarding human nature; they believe it to be profoundly wicked and perverse, a prey to the lowest instincts and the most wretched passions. To overcome these passions, to conquer these instincts, to set aglow in all this wretchedness a ray of idealism, of virtue and happiness, they all, or nearly all, see but one remedy: the acceptance of a religious rule of life, the submission of the whole inner self to a highly venerable tradition which, moreover, had stood the test. On this condition, they believe, and on this alone, can man be happy, at least, in so far as his moral destiny allows, and store up for his future life, the infinite happiness to which he aspires.

The writers of the Eighteenth and those of the Seventeenth Century are convinced that "man desires to be happy, and the one and only thing he desires is to be happy and that it is impossible for him not to wish to be so," and similarly they consider this aspiration legitimate. But instead of believing with Pascal and almost all his contemporaries that "happiness is neither outside of ourselves nor within us," but that it is "in God, and outside, yet within ourselves," they imagine that we would be perfectly happy, if we were free from all the restraints which so many centuries of "superstition" have caused to weigh upon us. Not having studied man at any great length nor with any great depth, they believe in his native goodness, they believe in the all-powerfulness of reason to remedy the temporary imperfections which they discover in him: in a word, they believe in the progressive disappearance of evil from the world. Illusion, perhaps, but a generous illusion, at least, in its principle, since it develops from an excess of confidence in human nature. Having little or no faith in a future life, holding themselves entirely aloof from it, in any case, the writers of that day bring to bear on the present life all their thought and care; they think only of directing it for the greatest happiness of humanity. Since man according to them can depend only on himself to improve his destiny, let him use all his efforts to make it more comfortable and agreeable. Convinced that man exists only in and through society and derives his value therefrom, and

that outside society there is for him no salvation, no happiness—some of them became passionate apologists of the social institution. They celebrated without ceasing its blessings and its very sanctity; they demanded that it should be perfected; and they were prone to see in a body of good laws the sovereign good which mankind might seek. Others, bolder or more imprudent, far from having this ingenuous confidence in the rules and conventions of society, attributed to them all the evils which fill with desolation the life of man. The enemy for them is society, they dream of a return to a so-called state of nature; and already they build up for themselves a state of happiness which makes them weep with tenderness.

Qui les fait pleurer de tendresse.

These are, to be sure, very different tendencies, very different also from those current in the preceding century. But after all, it makes slight difference whether Bossuet has a conception of a man and life which bears very slight resemblance to that held by Voltaire or Rousseau; all three of them, and their literary contemporaries are as though haunted by the obsession of this same problem, that of happiness. And it is this essential preoccupation which gives to the literary work of these two centuries, as to French literature in general, that accent of humanity which foreigners themselves are pleased to find there.

Let us become more definite, if possible, and take a few of the great French masterpieces which have attracted the attention and admiration of Europe, and let us ask ourselves what more than any thing else has warranted and sealed their lasting fortune.

The Chanson de Roland is our first national masterpiece, incomplete, no doubt, somewhat crude, but a masterpiece nevertheless, in which, as Gaston Paris says, we find for the first time that divine expression, "douce France."

"Tere de France, mult estes dulz païs."

This masterpiece, during the Middle Ages, traveled over all Europe. It was taken into Spain and Germany long before the appearance of the Niebelungen and the Romancero del Cid; Italy, England, Denmark and Iceland were acquainted with it through numberless compilations or adaptations. Now, the real reason of this universal renown has been given by a poet, Auguste Angellier, in a work too little known: "What distinguishes the Chanson de Roland from the epics of all times," he said, "is, that it possesses that supreme beauty which comes from having exalted misfortune and being a poem of a noble defeat and a glorious death . . . . To be sure, the poet had no lack of glorious names, of battles, and warriors . . . . I know of nothing nobler or more touching than that unique spectacle of a nation which, though it may cling to happy and glorious

memories, is filled with enthusiasm for suffering and glorifies a defeat." And that is what all other peoples have felt more or less obscurely: they read, admired, adopted our old Chanson de Geste, because it offered to them the generous example of a higher humanity.

Let us go down the centuries. In all our literature there is no work more European than the Essays of Montaigne. It is beyond doubt that outside of France as well as within her borders men have appreciated the incomparable grace of a style perpetually new. But the work would not have had such a unanimous and constant success if it had not been, before all else, as Amyot said so well of another book, "un cas humain représenté au vif." "Every man," declared Montaigne, "bears in himself the form of a man's condition." And it is to describe this "form" of general humanity that he analysed himself with that somewhat sly complacency which some have judged to be hateful but in which most readers have found so much charm. For the first time in a work written in the "vulgar" tongue was seen to appear, and develop, a soul entirely described as it actually is; men recognized themselves in it; each one profited by this rich moral experience then placed at the service of all. Men admired that manner of writing "composed entirely of thoughts sprung from the ordinary topics of life." In short, "men were astonished and thrilled, for they had expected to see an author and they

found a man." Never perhaps, was this famous dictum applied more justly.

A few years pass: the classic literature comes into being and develops; the *Cid,* that immortal flower of youth, begins the long series of great tragedies. Would you ask, how the pure tradition of the French genius is here expressed? Compare the Spanish drama from which Corneille derived it. In many respects, the Cid might be defended as an "adaptation" or "transformation" of the play, very beautiful, moreover, by Guillen de Castro. But how free is this adaptation, how original, this transformation! A vast dramatic epic, variegated, picturesque, diffuse, uneven, full of details of manners and customs which surprise or shock the reader, in which improbability and bad taste flourish with luxuriant ingenuity; such is the Spanish work. Corneille abridges, reduces and concentrates. He unifies in a strong stage action the multiplicity of incidents and episodes. He simplifies the subject, the intrigue and the style; he brings the characters nearer to us; he analyzes them deeply. He eliminates pitilessly from his model all elements which are too barbarous, too local, too Spanish. He brings into full light the psychological and moral interest of the theme which he develops. In a word, by every means in his power, he humanizes the foreign work and the inner conflict which he derived from it impressed itself not only on all literary Europe but on the Spaniards themselves.

"Fair as the Cid" ("Beau comme le Cid"), Corneille's contemporaries used to say. Speaking of Pascal's *Pensées* the following generation might say with Madame de Lafayette that, "it was a bad sign for those who did not enjoy that book" and posterity has to a large extent ratified the judgment of La Rochefoucauld's friend. Now, what is in the *Pensées* which even today moves us and touches our inmost hearts? Strength and beauty of style? Depth and boldness of thought? We are certainly not indifferent to these qualities. But how much more are we interested and enthused by the methodical, ardent soul which we feel throbbing in these simple fragments. Here is a man—one of the most powerful minds the world has ever known—who has scrutinized with a sort of tragic anguish the problem of fate, and who, having found its solution, wishes to lead his fellowmen to the blessed convictions in which he himself has found the only peace for his anxiety. He reasons, grows tender, implores, inveighs, in turn. He is not a logician arguing; he is an apostle, almost a martyr confessing his faith and desirous of sharing it with others. "If these words please you and seem just to you, know that they are spoken by a man who went on his knees before and after to pray to the Being Who is infinite and indivisible, to Whom he submits his whole self that He may make you subject to Himself for your own salvation and His glory." What an accent of serious and manly tenderness! Surely, this is one of our brothers who

suffers with us, who prays for us and who is fervently searching for the truth with us! "Would you have me shed forever the blood of my humanity, and you not give even your tears!" These wonderful words, which Pascal attributes to God, are the very words, we hear from the lips of Pascal himself on every page of the *Pensées.*

An entirely different phrase might serve as an epitome of the work of Molière. "Ah! Nature! Nature!" cries the worthy Argan on seeing his daughter smile, as soon as he spoke to her of marriage; almost all of Molière is contained in that exclamation of admiration. Those whom he ridicules most gladly and with a sort of vengeful vim are all those who paint, disguise, mutilate, or thwart nature; bigots, pseudo-scientists, jealous husbands, vulgar upstarts, amorous dotards, blue-stockings and dandies. How much better everything would move along in the world, according to him, if each one instead of trying to check or correct it, simply followed his instinct. The lesson might be dangerous, if, on the one hand, it were not accompanied by wise advice to be moderate, and if, on the other hand, we did not feel, beneath the scoffing and laughter a deep pity and great love for the poor creatures who are themselves the cause of their wretchedness. Molière is, indeed, a very human genius. Even though he has less knowledge than others, even though he has somewhat failed to understand the highest regions of human nature, he has carefully explored, described and loved the aver-

age and moderate side of human life. The somewhat unexpected remark which he puts into the mouth of his Don Juan: "Here! I give you that for the love of humanity," is perhaps one of the few rare expressions coming, not from the author, but the man—one of the few expressions which the great impersonal poet allowed himself to utter.

At first sight, nothing resembles the work of Molière less that *l'Esprit des Lois* of Montesquieu. And still we already find in Molière certain tendencies which are to reach broad development in the work of the next century, in Montesquieu as well as Voltaire. "Humanity had lost her rights: M. de Montesquieu gave them back to her," was said of the *Esprit des Lois* and these words express accurately enough the nature of the prodigious success which the book had in its time. If the essential object of Montesquieu in writing the *Esprit des Lois* was to justify by profound reasoning the innumerable laws and customs which govern the various communities of men, to inspire in his readers a respect and religious awe for these venerable institutions, to spread the ideas of liberty, toleration, and justice, which must make social life more comfortable and agreeable; in a word, to bring everything to bear on the welfare of society, then, we may readily appreciate that his contemporaries were infinitely grateful to him for having devoted his life to straightening and drawing more closely the bonds which unite mankind.

Almost a century later. A new world is forming. A new poetry has come to life, which found its purest and most sincere expression in the work of Lamartine. What the poetry of Lamartine meant to his contemporaries has never perhaps been better expressed than by a critic well-nigh forgotten today, who was never able to recall without emotion that day when, still a young school boy, having by chance bought the little volume of the *Méditations* he found therein "all the feelings of his soul, and all the passions of his heart, all the happiness of earth and the delights of heaven, all the hopes of the present and all the anxieties of the future." And this opinion of Jules Janin is not confined to the French and foreign readers of 1820, for, between 1905 and 1914, in nine years, then, a single Paris publisher sold more than forty-two thousand copies of the *Méditations* alone. We are forced to believe that for nearly a century men have not ceased to see and love in these verses of Lamartine the modern man in his entirety, of whom the poet, while singing of himself, traced for us the ideal, yet, natural, living image.

May we not say as much of the novels of George Sand, of all our writers the one, who in flowing elegance of style, in generosity of thought, and perhaps even in moral temperament reminds us most of Lamartine? She wrote more than one hundred novels inspired by widely divergent themes, which have enchanted, beguiled, and consoled many generations of readers. Is it quite certain, as is some-

times said, that they are no longer read in our day? We should not be surprised at finding some weak parts in a work so vast. But as long as there are men who dream and love, they will still read these books, I was tempted to say poems, wherein are expressed with almost childlike fidelity the dreams, often contradictory, the sentimental aspirations, the intellectual and social restlessness of a restless humanity.

Mise au centre de tout comme un écho sonore.

(In the center of all like a full sounding echo), the soul of George Sand was the mysterious seven stringed lyre of which she spoke in one of her books and from which only the pupil of Master Albertus could draw magnificent harmony.

"All that is of general interest and all that interests the mind of man," said Sainte-Beuve, "belongs rightfully to literature," and is not this the very definition or guiding principle of his criticism? The author of *Port Royal* and the *Lundis* was infinitely curious about all the forms and all the shades of difference within the human soul, and from Pascal to Ninon de Lenclos, including Jomini, he has, you may say, filled up all the space. That passionate and ever alert curiosity for moral realities which makes his work something really unique in all literature, while so many other critics have gone down in indifference and oblivion, is the very quality which gives him his ever living interest. Sainte-Beuve has given us a prodigious gallery of biographical

and moral portraits, more numerous, more varied, more searching than those of the collection composing the Parallel Lives. His own individual work was, likewise, to collect "examples of human life minutely dissected," and perhaps some day he may be called the French Plutarch.

Thus, in the most diverse types of literature, the loftiest masterpieces of French literature are precisely those which have appealed by their human qualities to the tender and grateful admiration of their contemporaries and of posterity. Humanity in every meaning of the word is indeed the characteristic of a literature which ten centuries of uninterrupted productivity have not exhausted. French literature is human because it studies man; it is human because it incessantly provokes and places in the foreground the most important questions which interest man: his happiness, his conduct, his destiny; and it is human because it is nourished, as it were, "on the milk of human kindness." *Homo sum* . . . It might be preferable not to recall the verse of Terence so often quoted, which has become commonplace through constant repetition. But, how are we to avoid it, if it forms, so to speak, the motto of the French writer?

And there, once more, is the explanation of the most constant characteristics, the most varied qualities of our language: clearness, simplicity, and honesty. Differing from the Englishman, or the German or even the Italian who so often write simply to satisfy themselves, to prolong their own inner dream

of beauty or truth, the Frenchman writes only for others. He believes that he has something to say, something to say to other men. Above all, he must be understood. The effort which is imposed upon every mind wishing to communicate with another mind, the Frenchman takes almost entirely upon himself. He strives to reduce to the minimum the reader's task. Instead of accepting his own thought in its natural unorganized state as it springs from the depths of his conscience, he subjects it to long reflection and concentration, refining it in such a way as to retain only the most incontestable and most impersonal elements. He eliminates with jealous care all that which, being too particular, too individual, might possibly be too obscure and appear unintelligible. Instead of clothing this residuum of thought in the first words which come to his mind he presents it to the public only after having deliberately chosen from all the verbal forms which he has evoked and compared one after the other, not only the elegant, but the shortest, simplest, clearest, the most direct, the most persuasive, the one which will enter directly into the mind of his reader. Boileau boasted of having taught Racine how to write easy verses with infinite care. That art is par excellence the art of the French writer. That perpetual consideration for his public, that scrupulous deference to his reader, that constant need of making his task easier, that touching desire to teach and not weary, to entertain and not becloud, to moralize but not to cross him, to be a discreet, kindly friend

to him, without showing any haughtiness, this sort of spiritual charity widely and generously practiced: all this has created in our language a tradition to which they are but few who are not faithful. It is to this tradition that we owe the wide diffusion of our language as well as of our spirit. Other peoples speak less trippingly than formerly of "the universality of the French tongue," but they continue to see in it—as quite recently the German author of *J'accuse*—the ideal language of diplomacy and international relations, and when a few years ago a Russian claimed for the French language the honor of being "the auxiliary language of the European group of the civilised world," was not this equivalent to recognizing in it the very language of civilised humanity?

II.

However fruitful and brilliant a literature may be, it is not the only, nor even the most important, factor in a civilisation; religion and philosophy are other factors more powerful and more intimate; and even though the genius of a race expresses itself perhaps less clearly in these more impersonal forms of national activity, it reveals itself nevertheless to the attention of the careful observer.

To appreciate fully what constitutes the peculiar originality of French philosophy, one has but to think of the philosophy of a neighboring people, only recently, still very arrogant, whose baneful deeds

we are beginning to suspect. One could not conceive of a more striking contrast, and first of all, with respect to the language. Whereas, in Germany, the philosophers—with the exception of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, who were brought up on our literature—manufacture a language barbarous, pedantic, all abristle with new words and enigmatic expressions, our French philosophers consider it a glory and a duty to speak and write the common language of all, to make their appeal not to scholastic pedants but to the average cultivated man. They are for the most part good, indeed excellent, at times, even great writers. If Renouvier and especially Auguste Comte write, let us confess, rather poorly, if Descartes is not the master of the language which we have at times hailed him as being, Malebranche is certainly a very remarkable writer and though we may be unwilling to place among the pure philosophers Voltaire and Rousseau, Lamennais, Taine or Renan, can we find in any language a greater writer than Pascal? "Good common sense," said Descartes,—and with these words *Le Discours de la Méthode* begins, "is that one thing in this world which is most evenly distributed." This belief all our philosophers have shared with Descartes. They do not divide the world into two parts: namely, philosophers and others—that is, the numberless mob of poor creatures who do not "think." In their opinion, every human being is capable of reflection, of "thought," consequently, of receiving and judging the truth. And it is to the universal judgment

of cultivated minds that they submit the results of their speculations upon the ensemble and essence of things.

Hence, whereas in other countries philosophy remains the private domain of certain specialists, even "professionals," with us, although we are not without our pure philosophers, philosophy is more a part of life, and penetrates all the domains of intellectual activity. It penetrates literature. Not a few of our writers, had they so wished, might have been specialists in pure philosophy; there is even one of them, Taine, who was a litterateur and a great writer only in spite of himself. More than one counts among his literary achievements, works of philosophy; for instance, Renan, Lamennais, Voltaire and Bossuet. From the works of all or nearly all of them, without mentioning purely philosophical ideas which they have sown therein, we may deduce without being arbitrary a "philosophy," a general view of the universe and of man, of life and of destiny, which is very coherent and at times very explicit. Without any desire certainly to transform Corneille, Racine, or Molière into profound metaphysicians, we should be wrong to see in these three poets only simple rhymesters and phrase-makers; they have "thought" just as vigorously as many others who "make a trade" of philosophy. Racine's psychology is exactly that which is found in the *Pensées* of Pascal, just as Corneille's psychology resembles in every feature that

found in Descartes' *Traité des Passions*. And not only Gassendi but perhaps Spinoza even would recognize himself in the words of Molière. "Man," wrote Spinoza, "is not in nature as a state within a state, but, as a part in a whole," and if Molière did not say this, did he not at least suggest it?

Philosophy with us penetrates science just as deeply. Not only is it a part of the tradition in France, much more than elsewhere, that philosophers by profession must have a thorough and wide training in science, but, besides, our greatest philosophers have been more than simple men of science, they have been great scientists, as for instance, Descartes, Pascal, Auguste Comte, Cournot, Claude Bernard, Henri Poincaré. French philosophy and science have both profited equally from this mutual interpenetration. On the one hand, our philosophers instead of building in the clouds, have preserved, even in metaphysics, the excellent habits of mind which are engendered and maintained by the discipline of science for they have clung to reality, Method and precision were not virtues foreign to them; when they speculated on nature and on science, they started from positive concrete notions which they knew by more than mere hearsay. On the other hand, our scientists, on leaving their laboratories and mingling with the world of general ideas, learned to think and to judge their science; they were able to give it its proper place in the general scheme of things and of human knowledge;

they knew its exact bearing, and at the same time they touched its limits. They saw clearly that science was not all of man, and, that in man even, and outside of man, many realities were beyond its grasp. In short, they firmly repudiated near science (*scientisme*), that gross doctrine held by half-scientists or half-philosophers which has come to us from Germany and which consists in making positive science the only type of knowledge and the only rule of action. Our philosophers have maintained the rational cult of science, and this is well; they have avoided making of it a religion or a superstition, and this is better still. By freeing science from this servile superstition, they have done the human mind a service, the effects of which we are only beginning to realize.

The tradition of French philosophy has still another characteristic. It loaths rigid abstract systems, "palaces of ideas," which enchant under other skies the dialectic imagination. Not, of course, that we are incapable of that. Descartes, that "hero of modern thought," as Hegel called him, is as constructive a genius as Kant; and Malebranche has no reason to envy Spinoza, nor Auguste Comte, Hegel. But in the French systems we find less of the arbitrary and a keener and more constant desire to keep close to reality and to take it as a model; moreover, the systems of our philosophers are not vast prisons in which they shut themselves up, forbidding themselves even to leave or look outside. Even though they may not contradict themselves,

they do sometimes at least try other paths, somewhat divergent, they follow points of view, they attempt modes of thought of which the general attitude of their minds gave no indication. Take Descartes, for example, he is considered, and with reason, the father of modern rationalism and is believed to have brought about the triumph of a mechanistic conception of the world which long survived him; and all that is quite true. But there is in Descartes more than one page that has a different ring; and the more recent philosophies of liberty, voluntary effort, intuition which are ordinarily traced back, and very justly, to Pascal, may find their origin also in the author of the *Discours de la Méthode*. And the case of Descartes is not the only one in our literature.

The fact is that most of our philosophers, just as they are unwilling to leave the solid ground of scientific observation, are equally unwilling to leave the solid ground of moral reality. Whatever may be their instinctive preference for adventure in metaphysics, they are at times able to restrain it so as to devote themselves to more modest investigation in psychology or moral philosophy. "What is thought on the planet Sirius," as Renan said, though it may not be absolutely indifferent to them, is, however, not their sole preoccupation. It is really in man that they are especially interested and they are attracted above all by human problems. The human soul is for them an enigma more disturbing and useful to solve than all the enigmas of the uni-

verse. And to this they always return. Now, by studying unceasingly this shifting and fleeting reality they have formed of truth an idea more flexible, less rigid, in a word, more living, than the idea, the rough outline of which has been formed in other lands by pure logicians. The theories of our philosophers remain open for later observation and research. They do not presume to enclose the absolute therein. They leave to others the task of rectifying, of completing, of enriching their personal conceptions; and philosophy thus understood and practiced has something of the free motion and wave-like continuity of life. Since they all have the feeling that the human soul is something of infinite complexity and variety, the idea would never occur to them to proclaim any one national type of humanity as superior to all others and propose that it be universally admired and obeyed. On the contrary it is the coexistence of multiple forms of mind, each having its inalienable right to existence that they perceive to be the essential condition of all progress. French philosophy has always believed in freedom and never could it be resigned to make an apology of despotism; that is one of its most constant characteristics; neither Hobbes nor Hegel was a Frenchman, nor Nietzche. Nothing is more foreign to the whole French spirit than the barbarous and immoral conception of the "superman." To be a man; to be a man as completely, as deeply, as possible; not to emphasize, not to over-emphasize human nature and, furthermore, not to degrade it;

to respect it in one's self and in others; to accept its limitations, develop its powers and reconcile its contrasts: such is the ideal which, from all time, French philosophy has made its own and spread throughout the world. Others are more filled with mad pride—; but is there any other that is more wise and more generous?

It would be simplifying things too much to define religion as the philosophy of the humble folk. But it is certain that the humble have no other, and made as it is for the humble as well as for the expert, religion translates in a more spontaneous and more complete manner than pure philosophy the aspirations of an entire people. This law so strongly established by Fustel de Coulanges is verified in our own history. Through many vicissitudes Catholicism has remained our national religion. And we are forced to believe that between Catholicism and the French genius, there was a sort of "pre-established harmony." because, from the moment when Roman Gaul became entirely Christian, she has shown herself to be wonderfully faithful to the Church. When the Barbarians who invaded the land, Burgundians or Visigoths, were inclined to Arianism, she was able to escape this heresy. More than that, it is around the Catholic idea that national unity was constituted, so to speak. If Clovis had become an Arian, would he have been so easily accepted as king of France? In any case, by accepting Catholicism he indicated that he had a sure premonition of our national destiny; and after him, Charles Martel

and Charlemagne would not have succeeded in founding a new dynasty, if they had not been above all the champions of Catholicity. The rôle of the Church as a civilising and moral influence was nowhere more visible or more universally recognized than in France during the Middle Ages; and France during the Middle Ages rendered in her turn such admirable service to Catholicism that she won, we know, the title "Eldest Daughter of the Church," and her kings, that of "most Christian kings." The France of the Crusades, the France of the Gothic cathedrals, the France of St. Louis was for long centuries the great Catholic power. In the Sixteenth Century when a formidable religious revolution was overturning Europe, it was to the traditional interpretation of Christianity that the land of Calvin finally rallied and it is this interpretation that she imposed on the new line of kings. Finally, in our own day when "religions based on authority," are so fiercely attacked, good judges opine that nowhere, at least, in the realm of ideas and of the inner life, is Catholicism as living and as active as it is among us. It is the France of today which furnishes the Church with the greatest number of her missionaries, two-thirds of the total number; and this simple fact tells more than all abstract considerations.

But France is not the only Catholic nation; Spain and Italy, for instance, might also claim the title. French Catholicism, however, does not resemble Italian or Spanish Catholicism. It is to be sure the

same system of dogmas or beliefs, but each great people puts its imprint on them and develops one aspect rather than another, according to the dispositions of its particular genius. Spain has been especially attracted by the mystical side of Catholicism, the Italians by the artistic and poetic. France sees in religion something else and something more than a beautiful poem which men take for truth (*"un beau poème tenu pour vrai,"*) as Taine said, or a means of exalting, purifying, rendering sublime the individual soul. Not that France fails to recognize the legitimacy of this two-fold point of view, for, she is the land of Pascal and of Chateaubriand. But, in general, she prefers the point of view held by Bossuet, which is nevertheless somewhat different. In the eyes of the author of the *Variations,* Catholicism is above all a social bond (*lien social*). Not only does it unite men of one generation, one to the other, by regulating their mutual relations, prescribing one and the same ideal, and that unity which comes from one and the same belief, but it also links the present with the past and the future, through dogma of the Communion of Saints; and thus, this grouping together of the living and the dead which we call our country (*patrie*) instead of being a simple verbal expression becomes the most living of realities. And there is more to be said on this point. Catholicism thus conceived does not allow itself to be shut up within national boundaries; its dream is the brotherhood of man; it works for the union of souls through the unification

of beliefs; beyond racial differences, it wishes to build the City of God, which is to bring together all human consciences and of which "Christendom," during the Middle Ages was but a very imperfect model. Even though this conception of Catholicism which has its support in the most authentic orthodoxy, is not peculiar to the French, it is in France, however, that it met with the greatest favor and that it has been not only adopted but practiced most consistently. The Frenchman is the least individualistic of men, he is a born apostle; he loves to think in communion with other men, to propagate his ideas, to preach, to convert. Catholicism encouraged and utilized these deep instincts of the race. A religion the excellency of which did not betray itself in the perfecting of social life, would soon be considered in France as a false religion.

And this is so truly the case, that French irreligion, in its struggle against Catholicism, has never developed any other objection nor found any other way to express it. With what did Voltaire and the Encyclopedists reproach the religion of Pascal and Bossuet? With being contrary to human nature, to general civilisation, to the "progress of enlightenment," to the very laws of society. They reproached, in so many words, good Christians with being poor citizens. "How," said Montesquieu, "restrain by law a man who believes that he is certain that the greatest punishment that the courts can inflict upon him will last but for a moment and open for him happiness." Rebellious to all asceticism, not realiz-

ing that the tendencies of human nature are not all equally good, and that it is good moral and social hygiene to restrain and suppress some of them in order to permit others to develop more freely, poor psychologists and mediocre historians, "our philosophers," dodged the evidence; they were unwilling to recognize the innumerable services which Catholicism had rendered to civilisation in Europe, of which it is one of the essential factors; they denied its social value and moralizing action. But it is curious to note that it is in the very name of "humanity"—a humanity which Catholicism had taught them to love—that they fought against Catholicism; resembling in this, as La Bruyère might have said, "those sturdy children who have been carefully nurtured and, then, turning on their nurse, beat her," (*"ces enfants drus et forts d'un bon lait qui battent leur nourrice"*).

The truth of history, we know, is quite different and Chateaubriand in his *Génie du Christianisme* had no great difficulty in reëstablishing it against the last Encyclopedists. Certainly, Christianity has not transformed or renewed entirely human nature and only too frequently has religion itself served as a pretext for an outburst of passion, in which there was absolutely nothing Christian. But, if we investigate carefully in its origin all the progress of a social or moral nature of which we are justly proud, how much of it must we not attribute to Christian influence? If we were able by one stroke of the pen to strike out what Taine called "the contribution of

Christianity in our modern society," we should be dismayed at the sight which the world and history would offer to our gaze: "a den of thieves or a brothel," to quote Taine once more. That is what has almost always been clearly felt in France. "La plus-value humaine," to quote the rather odd but expressive words of Alexandre Dumas fils—that is what French Catholicism has always had in view. It is more taken with action than with contemplation, and with social action more than with individual perfection; or rather individual perfection in place of being confined to itself and absorbed in itself, always resolves itself with us into social action. Subtle theological discussions, minute research in exegesis, over-refinement of complicated devotion are scarcely our specialty. A rugged, good common sense which goes straight to the point, a simple faith not without its shades of difference but without any superfluities, a very keen appreciation of moral realities, a great enthusiasm for the apostolate, and a real need of communicating one's belief, and above all, perhaps, a desire for brotherhood and a sort of passion for charity: these it would seem are the principal characteristics of French Catholicism from St. Martin to St. Louis and from Bossuet to Lacordaire.

And these also are the features which characterize in religious history French holiness. For there is a French holiness, just as there is an Italian and a Spanish holiness. Although the saints belong to the Church Universal, they belong also to their

country of origin, the peculiar genius and deep thought of which they express in their own manner. Our French saints do not resemble those of other nations; they have in common, as it were, a family resemblance which is their distinguishing mark. However ardent and pure their inner life may be, it does not turn them away from practical action; on the contrary it closely unites them in full harmony of soul with that humanity which they love and whose salvation, even temporal, they passionately desire. St. Bernard was, as it were, the representative of the Papacy in his day. St. Louis was the best, most generously active, most just and most scrupulously devoted, and most human of all kings. The more we study the history of Joan of Arc, the more we are impressed by her luminous good sense, by what I should like to call her bold realism. It is by quite different virtues and by other dominant traits that St. Theresa, the great Spanish saint and "the poor man" of Assisi, the great Italian saint appeal to our admiration. We shall not hesitate to give them our admiration, but we shall reserve a large share of it also for him who through his shrewd and firm reasoning, his prodigious activity, his passionate love for the humble, his inexhaustible charity deserves to be greeted as our great French saint—Saint Vincent de Paul.

III.

The genius of a race is reflected in its religion as well as in its philosophy and literature, but it impresses itself upon the world and is justified only by the grandeur and continuity of its historical rôle. Were it not for Marathon and Salamis, Greek civilisation would not be for us all that it is today and Homer, Aristotle, and the Parthenon would not have in our eyes all their meaning and all their worth.

Very early and as though she felt called to a high destiny, France became conscious of the fact that she was a moral person, and she strove to realize her national unity. Her first king, Clovis, knew intuitively what this great country might become over which he was called upon to rule; he had a very clear conception of its geographical limits, made every effort to control and amalgamate under his authority the different peoples who had successively established themselves there and to defend it against the new invasions; finally, he made Paris his capital. At his death there was a real France. But the France of Clovis was quickly dismembered and it required long centuries and long trials to reëstablish it. That was particularly the patient and persistent task of the third race of our kings. Through many vicissitudes, relying, moreover, on public sentiment, they were obliged to reconquer France from innumerable petty French kings and powerful neighbors who were always eagerly on the watch

for our weaknesses and kept their eyes ever fastened on the rich booty which they found on our soil. And the result of their bravery, of their policy and of their perseverance was such that at the end of the Middle Ages, "La douce France" had become a political reality—the first of the states of Modern Europe whose unity is an accomplished fact. A unity, still imperfect, no doubt, since at the present time, the dream of our ancient Monarchy, is not realized, for we have not yet attained our natural boundaries, although this dream may be realized tomorrow. It is, nevertheless, a unity solid and enduring which may indeed increase but whose foundations are already firmly laid.

To establish this unity for such a long time precarious and always threatened, many wars were necessary, long and sometimes endless wars. France instinctively, no doubt, since she was the daughter of Gaul, but from necessity, also, has been a great military nation. She has known and practiced all kinds of warfare; wars of defense and wars of conquest, wars for the balance of power, wars of expansion, wars for hegemony and wars of propaganda. But it is to be noticed that almost all the wars that France has provoked or sustained were really defensive wars, or if you prefer, wars for national unity. The Italian wars, the constantly recurring wars against the House of Austria, the majority even of the wars of Louis XIV had no other object in view, for it was a question, first of all, of completing or consolidating our unity, of driving

far from our frontiers an enemy too powerful and ambitious, of forestalling his proud plans, and of reducing him to inactivity or powerlessness. It is not even certain that preoccupations of this kind were not in the mind of Napoleon and that he always and everywhere allowed himself to be drawn on by the mere spirit of conquest and domination; in any case, his armies had the conviction, often illusory, that they were fighting against the "tyrants" and struggling for the liberty of the world. Moreover, as a matter of fact, was not the result of the revolutionary and imperial wars the awakening of the various national consciences and the encouragement of their aspirations? And did not Napoleon himself begin the unification of Germany?

Thus, even when France practiced with some degree of intemperance "sacred selfishness," she had difficulty in continuing in that direction. We must insist on that, for it is an essential characteristic of her history. The majority of the wars which she undertook in order to consummate or defend her national unity had at the same time as their object to guarantee and to consolidate the balance of power in Europe. The traditional policy of France has ever been, not to permit any one power to acquire the hegemony of Europe, and thus to bring beneath its despotic yoke other weaker states, to desire independence for others as she desires it for herself, to establish between the respective forces and ambitions of the diverse peoples a stable equilibrium, to check them one by the other, to assure to them all

the free development of their own genius, to oppose any encroachment, any usurpation, and all this not only for love of peace but also for love of justice. This policy was certainly to her advantage but she was not the only one to benefit by it, and, in the main, rare are the victories of France which have not been to some degree victories in the interest of Europe. Let us suppose that Philip Augustus had not been victorious at Bouvines, the future of Europe would have been as profoundly modified as the future of France herself. If Joan of Arc had not been successful in her mission, France would have become English and, once more, the cause of the freedom of Europe would have been singularly compromised. If France struggled so much against the House of Spain and the House of Austria, it was no doubt because such a powerful empire constituted for her a constant danger; but, the danger was scarcely less great for the other nations of Europe; and the treaty of Westphalia, while it confirmed the victory of French diplomacy and arms was for nearly two hundred years the safeguard of the rights of European states. France was not satisfied with assuring to other peoples the right to existence; with her blood and treasure she helped several nationalities in their efforts to establish themselves. The unification of Italy is her work; and even though it may be said that the cession of Savoy and the comté of Nice was liberal pay for our personal sacrifices, what material profit did we gain from our intervention in the American war of In-

dependence and the war of Greek Independence? Generally very careful to conciliate her national interests with the general interests, European or human (this is certainly the ideal of the great French wars), France more than any other nation is capable of abandoning all self-interest, of consecrating herself to the interests of others, and as soon as the great ideals of justice and humanity are at stake, no one has ever appealed in vain to her generosity.

We should be much mistaken, were we to admit on the assertion of some theorists and certain foreigners that our colonial expeditions are a stain on the usual idealism of our foreign policy. First of all, we forget that the colonial wars are rather far from being wars of mere conquest. Whenever they are not brought about by anxiety for the national security, as, for instance, the wars in Algeria and Tunis, they have been brought about by serious economic and political reasons. A great power, which the distribution of world territory would leave unmoved, and which would refrain from participating in it, would soon see itself outdistanced by its rivals, and its prestige and material prosperity would promptly decrease; it would remain stationary, while others would develop and grow; it would thereby consent to a shifting of the balance of power of which one day or another it might become the victim. Colonial wars are often wars of national interest. On the other hand, they are not necessarily unjust or immoral wars; they become so, only the moment they have as their object the enslave-

ment of peoples of equal culture. Now, this is not our case. Without having the slightest desire to divide men into inferior and superior races, we may rightly believe that the tribes in the Congo or in Madagascar have remained for the present at least in an inferior stage of civilisation. It would be a strange paradox to give the same weight to their notion of what native land means as to that of the natives of Alsace-Lorraine. Besides, it is not a question of reducing them to slavery, but of taking them under our guardianship, of watching carefully over their real interests, of teaching them the value of a regular social life; in short, it is a question of raising them little by little to our own plane. We repay them generously in moral and social help for the wealth which we take from their soil. In a word, we civilise them, we make them more human, we attach them gradually to a sort of life which we consider superior; we do not exploit them. At least, it is always in this manner that we, in France, have understood colonization; and we feel that this conception is sufficiently altruistic to justify the expeditions and wars which we have undertaken to realize it. It is enough for the moment to cast a glance on our work in Algeria, in Tunis and in Morocco, to demonstrate that the reality of the facts, in the matter of colonial activity, corresponds very exactly to that ideal which we have constantly held.

France more than any other modern nation, perhaps, has the right to glory in this ideal which con-

sists in not separating her cause from that of civilisation itself; has she not caused it to triumph, by aid of arms, on more than one field of battle? She was not yet France when already on the fields about Châlons she stopped, as did Athens in days of yore at Marathon, the most formidable horde that could have threatened our western civilisation. Had Attila won, modern Europe would not alone have been submerged and annihilated by the brutally destructive invasion; but also all the sentiments, traditions and ideas which Greece and Rome had bequeathed us. Two centuries later, Christian civilisation is again in peril through the triumphant invasions of the Saracen and France again on the field of Poitiers saved the world from the yoke of Islam. And finally, when a few months ago, under the onrush of the new Barbarians, all that forms the adornment, moral refinement and pride of our souls today was threatened with eternal destruction, France once more on the historic plains of the Marne broke the drive of the German hordes and forced them to retreat. An English writer said eloquently and concisely: "It is the lofty and hard fate of that country to be the guardian nation"—the guardian of this treasure of humanity, of wisdom, and of experience and morality which we call civilisation.

That is why France, more than any other nation, loves to battle for ideas. The Crusades, those heroic deeds of Christian idealism, are not an exclusively French work; but, it was in France that they had their origin; it was a French monk, it was

a French Pope who preached the first Crusade; it was a French king who led the last two and they were Frenchmen who participated most generously in them. The Frenchman never fights so well as when he feels that his cause surpasses him and that his material interest is not alone at stake. To be sure, he loves his own country and in order to defend his native soil he consents to the heaviest and most bloody sacrifices; but he is happy at the thought that these sacrifices are of profit to others than himself and his countrymen. When these sacrifices are demanded of him not only for his country but for the triumph of one of those great and generous ideas, humanity, religion, justice, civilisation, liberty, which raise man above himself and merge with his ephemeral self something of the eternal laws, then he offers his life with that sort of mystic ardor which makes him so terrible on the fields of battle. The really French wars, in truth, are more or less Crusades, and this is manifest at the present moment. The Wars of the Revolution were wars of national defense and at the same time wars to spread revolutionary doctrine. The Volunteers of 1792 believed with touching sincerity that they were the missionaries of liberty in the world. Did not the Legislative Assembly declare that France "was not undertaking the war for conquest," and later on, after Jemmapes what did the Convention say? "The National Convention declares in the name of the French nation that it will bring aid and brotherhood to all the peoples who wish to recover

their liberty." They speak of liberty instead of speaking of the "tomb of Christ"—the spirit, however, has not changed at all.

There is, therefore, no history less narrowly national than the history of France. That is true even of the history of her internal development. France radiates her influence outside of her boundaries through her spirit and example, even when she appears to be absorbed solely in herself. First among the nations of feudal Europe she conceived the regime of a strongly centralized monarchy; and this regime, no sooner inaugurated among us became immediately the ideal model towards which all other great states turned. We in France have never sought to imitate Spain, Russia, or Germany. But during the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries, there is not a single German princeling who did not attempt to copy Louis XIV. England, which was to be our inspiration so frequently in later years, fell, as all Europe of that time did, under the influence of the Great King. She forgot, if not her language, at least, her literature, and Corneille and Racine were more admired in London than Shakespeare. When in the next century, we began to break away from a regime the benefits of which we had exhausted, this same regime was still flourishing at Berlin and St. Petersburg: Frederick II and Peter the Great were disciples of Louis XIV.

In France, we are accustomed to consider the Revolution of 1789 as one of the great events of history, of an importance equal to that of the Re-

formation. But already, at a very early date that same opinion prevailed in foreign lands and neither Kant nor Burke nor Goethe nor Joseph de Maistre, as we know, were under any illusion as to its significance. Now, the fact that a revolution purely French, and one which at the beginning had as its sole purpose to remedy the abuses of the old regime and to give a constitution to the country, should have produced this reaction, first of all, in the mind and, later, in the institutions of modern Europe—that is, truly, something unique in the history of the world. Other nations have had revolutions; such as England, America, and Russia. These revolutions remained national revolutions, thoroughly local, consequently; and their general importance was scarcely greater than that of our Fronde. The French Revolution was nothing like this. From the beginning, it passed beyond the frontiers of the land of its origin. It was not only the Frenchman of the Eighteenth Century whom it wished to free, it was all mankind; and it was less than two months after the fall of the Bastille that the Constituant Assembly voted the famous declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, August 27, 1789. An historian, Edgar Quinet, would have us see in this manifesto, "the gospel of a new era," and that may be an exaggeration; because, after all, it was useless for the National Assembly to place itself "in the presence and under the auspices of the Supreme Being," for there is nothing less religious than the Declaration and if it is a gospel, it is a purely political gospel.

On the other hand, however, it cannot be denied that these few pages changed the political and social mentality of Europe, at least, in those countries in Europe into which the French armies penetrated. Nor can it be denied that the Revolution in the course of its development progressed in the manner of a real religion. Absolutist Europe still half feudal, realized clearly the peril with which it was threatened by the French Revolution. And when all Europe rose up against the land of the Declaration of the Rights of Man, it was no doubt because she hoped and expected to share the spoils; but, it was also principally because she had determined to crush the subversive nation, guilty of having invented and propagated a pernicious and anarchistic doctrine. More even than wars of self-interest the wars of the Revolution were wars of principles and this is what gave them particularly, in so far as they concerned the French, their undeniable grandeur.

But the French Revolution continued and progressed. Our two Revolutions of 1830 and 1848, also, had an echo throughout Europe and they provoked nearly everywhere revolutionary movements and brought about the birth of liberal constitutions. This undoubtedly means that the Declaration of the Rights was not a mere accident in our national history and all nations in order to be free and realize their deepest aspirations were awaiting the word from France which meant freedom for them. *Gesta Dei per Francos!* There was a time when we scarcely dared recall these old familiar words which

sometimes, we must admit, had too easily flattered our pride. Still, we must fully recognize that these words are not absolutely illusory, that France in the history of the world has been the source of great things and that those who think she was created to try on herself the experiments from which the other nations could profit, are perhaps not entirely wrong.

The other nations! Yes, they have envied us, fought us and railed at us, they have not always done us justice; they have not always realized what we had done for them; but they have never hated us, and more than once they have strongly felt "what France meant to the world." When towards the end of August, 1914, the German army was advancing by forced marches on Paris, when, for an instant, one might have been justified in believing in the success of the Pan-German plan, and in the dismemberment if not in the total disappearance of France, there was in all countries allied or neutral an outburst of anguish and awful fright. When, as in a flash of lightning, the world saw all the work of French civilization in the past, it realized the salutary and unique influence of that civilisation, and it was with a sort of terrible awe that it faced the distant future with the thought that France could give no aid. It seemed that humanity was about to lose that luminous and beneficent genius which for so many centuries had served it as its guide. A volume might be made up from the touching evidences of friendship which our misfortune evoked and which our victory soon changed into a warm outburst of

delight. In Spain and in Italy, in Switzerland and in Holland, in England and in Russia, everywhere confident joy and hope revived followed the gloomy anxiety of those tragic days. We may say without boasting: the world, holding its breath, witnessed an event which was decisive in the history of the world, for it saw, understood, and realized perhaps, unknown to itself how dear and how necessary France was. Just as a friend whose smiling and discreet love appears to us at its value, only when we are threatened with losing him, so France about to succumb seemed more beautiful and more worthy than ever of the admiration and affection of all. It was a Swiss, Paul Seippel, who wrote at that moment: "We were saying one to the other—if France is crushed this time what is to become of her? What is to be done with that nation which has played such a magnificent rôle in the history of the world and to which we French speaking Swiss owe the best of our thought? What place will be left to her on the face of the globe? What rôle can she still play? Who in the world will be able to counterbalance her conquerors?" And he might have added: "Who will be from now on our great teacher of humanity?"

For it is always to this ideal that we must return, when we desire to penetrate into the very heart of French civilisation. It is the mark of the originality of France and it is her mission also to see all things under the aspect of humanity—*sub specie humanitatis*. Hence, also, that power of sympathy which

flows from her literature, her philosophy, her religion and from her entire history. France has at times carried the love of humanity to a point where it became dangerous to herself and more than once in the course of her existence she has been the victim and dupe of her own humanitarian tendencies. A glorious weakness is that which consists in not knowing hatred, in not distrusting mankind, in forgetting too quickly the hard lessons of experience, obstinate jealousy and unscrupulous ambition. France has never been able to believe that force alone, the force of pride and brute strength, could be the last word in the affairs of this world. She has never admitted that science could have for its ultimate purpose to multiply the means of destruction and oppression, and it was one of her old writers, Rabelais, who pronounced these memorable words: "Science without conscience is the ruin of the soul." She has not been able to conceive that an ethnic group, a particular type of mind, should have the right to suppress others: instead of a rigid and mechanical uniformity of thought and life, the ideal to which she aspires, is that of the free play, spontaneous development, and the living harmony of the varying geniuses of the nations of the world. A world in which flourished the systematic and unreasoning abuse of brute force, pedantic formalism, bureaucratic haughtiness, fatuous and so-called scientific ugliness and a taste for the "Kolossal" would seem to her the most hateful of hells. What others call *Kultur* she calls by its true name, Barbarism.

In contrast to this barbarism, the more barbarous because scientific, French civilisation stands out clearly, trait for trait, in constant opposition. France means liberty, lovable grace, a sense of proportion, courtesy, discretion, refinement,—France means indulgence, pity, charity,—in a word, France means humanity. If she should disappear from among the nations of the world, human life would lose some part of its nobility and beauty.